

PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST NO. 719

**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*"Praying in the Holy Ghost."
Jude 1:20.*

THESE words occur in a passage where the apostle is indicating the contrast between the ungodly and the godly. The ungodly are mocking, speaking great swelling words, and walking after their ungodly lusts, while the righteous are building themselves up in their most holy faith, and keeping themselves in the love of God. The ungodly are showing the venom of their hearts by mourning and complaining, while the righteous are manifesting the new principle within them by "Praying in the Holy Ghost." The ungodly man bears wormwood in his mouth, while the Christian's lips drop with the virgin honey of devotion. As the spider is said to find poison in the very flowers from which the bees suck honey, so do the wicked abuse to sin the selfsame mercies which the godly use to the glory of God.

As far as light is removed from darkness, and life from death, so far does a believer differ from the ungodly. Let us keep this contrast very vivid. While the wicked grow yet more wicked, let us become more holy, more prayerful, and more devout, saying with good old Joshua, "Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Observe that the text comes in a certain order in the context. The righteous are described, first of all, as building themselves up in their most holy faith. Faith is the first divine grace, the root of piety, the foundation of holiness, the dawn of godliness, to this must the first care be given. But we must not tarry at the first principles. Onward is our course.

What then follows at the heels of faith? What is faith's firstborn child? When the vine of faith becomes vigorous and produces fruit unto holiness, which is the first ripe cluster? Is it not prayer, "Praying in the Holy Ghost"? That man has no faith who has no prayer, and the man who abounds in faith will soon abound in supplication. Faith the mother and prayer the child are seldom apart from one another. Faith carries prayer in her arms, and prayer draws life from the breast of faith. Edification in faith leads to fervency in supplication. Elijah first manifests his faith before the priests of Baal, and then retires to wrestle with God upon Carmel.

Study our text carefully, and see what follows after "Praying in the Holy Ghost." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Next to prayer comes an abiding sense of the love of God to us and the flowing up of our love towards God. Prayer builds an altar and lays the sacrifice and the wood in order, and then love, like the priest, brings holy fire from heaven and sets the offering in a blaze. Faith is, as we have said, the root of grace, prayer is the lily's stalk, and love is the spotless flower. Faith sees the Savior, prayer follows Him into the house, but love breaks the alabaster box of precious ointment and pours it on His head.

There is, however, a step beyond even the hallowed enjoyments of love, there remains a topstone to complete the edifice. It is believing expectantly, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Far-seeing hope climbs the staircase which faith has built, and bowing upon the knees of prayer looks through the window which love has opened, and sees the Lord Jesus Christ coming in His glory and endowing all His people with the eternal life which is to be their portion. See then the value of prayer as indicating the possession of faith, and as foreshadowing and supporting the strength and growth of love.

Coming directly to the text, we remark that the apostle speaks of prayer, but he mentions only one kind of praying. Viewed from a certain point, prayers are of many sorts. I suppose that no two genuine prayers from different men could be precisely alike. Master-artists do not often multiply the same painting. They prefer to give expression to fresh ideas as often as they grasp the pencil, and so the Master-Artist, the Holy Spirit, who is the author of prayer, does not often produce two prayers that shall be precisely the same upon the tablets of His people's hearts.

Prayers may be divided into several different orders. There is deprecatory prayer, in which we ward off the wrath of God, and entreat Him to turn away His fierce anger, to withdraw His rod, to sheath His sword. Deprecatory prayers are to be offered in all times when calamity is to be feared, and when sin has provoked the Lord to jealousy.

Then there are supplicatory prayers, in which we supplicate blessings and implore mercies from the liberal hand of God, and entreat our heavenly Father to supply our wants out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. There are prayers which are personal in which the suppliant pleads mainly concerning himself, and there are pleadings which are intercessory, in which like Abraham, the petitioner intercedes for Sodom, or entreats that Ishmael might live before God. These prayers for others are to be multiplied as much as prayers for ourselves, lest we make the mercy seat to become a place for the exhibition of spiritual selfishness. The prayer may be public or private, vocal or mental, protracted or short. Prayer may be salted with confession, or perfumed with thanksgiving. It may be sung to music or wept out with groans. As many as are the flowers of summer, so many are the varieties of prayer.

But while prayers are of these various orders, there is one respect in which they are all one if they be acceptable with God—they must be every one of them “in the Holy Ghost.” That prayer which is not in the Holy Ghost is in the flesh, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and we are told that they who are in the flesh cannot please God. All that comes of our corrupt nature is defiled and marred, and cannot be acceptable with the most holy God. If the heavens are not pure in His sight, how shall those prayers, which are born of the earth, be acceptable with Him? The seed of acceptable devotion must come from heaven’s storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. The dove will only bear a letter to the cote from which it came, and so will prayer go back to heaven if it came from heaven. We must shoot the Lord’s arrows back to Him. That desire which He writes upon our heart, will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Desirous to press this great truth upon the minds of my brethren this morning, I shall use the few words of the text in five ways.

I. First we shall use the text as A CRUCIBLE to try our prayers in.

I beseech you examine yourselves with rigorous care. Use the text as a refining pot, a furnace, a touchstone, or a crucible by which to discern whether your prayers have been true or not, for this is the test, have they been in very deed, “Praying in the Holy Ghost”?

Brethren and sisters, we need not judge those who pray unintelligible prayers, prayers in a foreign tongue, prayers which they do not understand—we know without a moment’s discussion of the question that the prayer which is not understood cannot be a prayer in the Spirit, for even the man’s own spirit does not enter into it, how then can the Spirit of God be there? The mysterious words or Latin jargon of the priests cannot come up before God with acceptance. Let us therefore keep our judgment for ourselves.

There may be those present who have been in the habit of using from their infancy a form of prayer. You perhaps would not dare to go out to your day’s business without having repeated that form at the bedside. You would be afraid to fall asleep at night without going through the words which you have set yourselves to repeat. My dear friends, may I put the question to you, will you try to answer it honestly, Have you prayed in the Holy Ghost? Has the Holy Spirit had anything to do with that form? Has He really made you to feel it in your heart? Is it not possible that you have mocked God with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue? Is it not probable that from the random manner in which one comes to repeat a well-known form that there may be no heart whatever in it, and not an atom of sincerity?

Does not God abhor the sacrifice where the heart is not found? It would be an unholy thing if we had increased our sins by our prayers. It would be a very unhappy fact if it should turn out that when we have bowed the knee in what we thought to be the service of God, we were actually insulting the God of heaven by uttering words which could not but be disgusting to Him because our hearts did not go with our lips. Let us rest assured that if for seventy years we have punctually performed our devotions by the use of the book, or of the form which we have learned, we may the whole seventy years never once have prayed at all, and the whole of that period we may have been living in God's esteem an ungodly, prayerless life, because we have never worshipped God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, and have never prayed in the Holy Ghost. Judge yourselves, brethren, that you be not judged.

But are there not others of us who never did use a written prayer, who from our earliest childhood have avoided and even abhorred forms of prayer, who nevertheless have good reason to judge our prayer just as much as others? We have given forth extemporaneous utterances, and those extemporaneous utterances necessarily required some little exercise of the mind, some little attention, but still we may have been heartless in them. I suppose we are well aware that we can get into such a habit of extemporaneous prayer that it is really very little or no better than if we repeated what we had learned. There may be such a fluency acquired by practice that one's speech may ripple on for five or ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, and yet the heart may be wandering in vanity or stagnant in indifference. The body may be on its knees, but the soul on its wings far away from the mercy seat.

Let us examine how far our public prayers have been in the Holy Ghost. The preacher standing here begs God to search him in that matter. If he has merely discharged the business of public prayer because it is his official duty to conduct the devotions of the congregation, he has much to account for before God. To lead the devotions of this vast throng without seeking the aid of the Holy Ghost is no light sin. And what shall be said of the prayers at prayer meetings? Are not many of them mere words? It were better if our friends would not speak at all rather than speak in the flesh. I am sure that the only prayer in which the devout hearer can unite, and which is acceptable with God, is that which really is a heart-prayer, a soul-prayer, in fact, a prayer which the Holy Ghost moves us to pray. All else is beating the air and occupying time in vain.

My brethren, I thank God that there are so many of you in connection with this church who are gifted in prayer, and I wish that every member of every Christian church could pray in public. You should all try to do so, and none of you should give it up unless it becomes an absolute impossibility. But oh! my brethren who pray in public, may it not be sometimes with you as with others of us—the exercise of gift and not the outflow of divine grace? And if so, ask the Lord to forgive you of such praying, and enable you to wait upon Him in the power of the Holy Ghost.

We may not forget to scrutinize our more private prayers, our supplications at the family altar, and above all, our prayers in that little room which we have dedicated to communion with God. O brethren, we might well be sick of our prayers, if we did but see what poor things they are! There are times when it is a sweet and blessed thing to lay hold of the horns of the altar, and to feel that the blood which sprinkles the altar has sprinkled you, that you have spoken to God and prevailed. Oh it is a blessed thing to grasp the Angel of the covenant, and to wrestle with Him even hour after hour, saying, "I will not let you go except you bless me." But I fear these are not constant things. We may say of them that they are angels' visits, few and far between.

Come, my brethren, put your prayers into this crucible of "Praying in the Holy Ghost." You will cast in much metal, but there will come out little of fine gold. Come, and lay your prayers upon this threshing floor, and thresh them with this text, "Praying in the Holy Ghost." And oh, how much of straw and of chaff will there be, and how little of the well-winnowed grain! Come hither and look through this window at the fields of our devotions, overgrown with nettles, and briars, and thistles, a wilderness of merely outward performances, and how small that little spot, enclosed by grace, which God the Holy Spirit Himself has cleared, and dug, and planted, from which the fruit of prayer has been brought forth unto perfection!

May our heavenly Father teach us to be humble in His presence, as we reflect how little even of our best things will stand the test of His searching eye, and may those of us who are His saints come to Him afresh, and ask Him to fill us with His Spirit, and to accept us in His Son.

II. We shall next use the text as A CORDIAL.

It is a very delightful reflection to the Christian mind that God observes His people, and does not sit as an indifferent spectator of their conflicts and difficulties. For instance, He closely observes us in our prayers. He knows that prayer, while it should be the easiest thing in the world, is not so. He knows that we erring ones find it not always easy to approach Him in the true spirit of supplication, and He observes this with condescending compassion. That is a precious verse for those hearts which are very weak and broken, "He knows our frame: He remembers that we are dust," and that other, "Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them who fear him." He takes notice of our frailties and of our failures in the work of supplication, He sees His child fall as it tries to walk, and marks the tears with which it bemoans its weakness. "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."

A sweeter thought remains in the text, namely, that having considered these failures of ours, which are many of them sinful, our Lord is not angry with us on account of them, but instead of being turned to wrath, He is moved to pity for us and love towards us. Instead of saying, "If you cannot pray, you shall not have; if you have not grace enough even to ask aright, I will shut the gates of mercy against you." He devises means by which to bring the lame and the banished into His presence. He teaches the ignorant how to pray and strengthens the weak with His own strength.

Herein He also does wonders, for the means whereby He helps our infirmity are exceedingly to be marveled at. That help is not to be found in a book or in the dictation of certain words in certain consecrated places, but in the condescending assistance of God Himself, for who is He that is spoken of in the text but God? The Holy Ghost, the third person of the adorable Trinity, helps our infirmities, making intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered. It is a mark of wondrous condescension that God should not only answer our prayers when they are made, but should make our prayers for us.

That the King should say to the petitioner, "Bring your case before me, and I will grant your desire," is kindness, but for him to say, "I will be your secretary, I will write out your petition for you, I will put it into proper words and use fitting phrases so that your petition shall be framed acceptably," this is goodness at its utmost stretch. But this is precisely what the Holy Ghost does for us poor, ignorant, wavering, weak sons of men. I am to understand from the expression, "Praying in the Holy Ghost," that the Holy Ghost is actually willing to help me to pray, that He will tell me how to pray, and that when I get to a point where I am at a pause and cannot express my desires, He will appear in my extremity and make intercession in me with groans which cannot be uttered. Jesus in His agony was strengthened by an angel, you are to be succored by God Himself. Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses, but the Holy Ghost Himself helps your infirmities.

My beloved brethren in Christ, the thought needs no garnishing of oratorical expressions. Take it as a wedge of gold of Ophir and value it, it is priceless, beyond all price. God Himself the Holy Ghost condescends to assist you when you are on your knees, and if you cannot put two words together in common speech to men, yet He will help you to speak with God. Ah! and if at the mercy seat you fail in words, you shall not fail in reality, for your heart shall conquer. God wants not words. He never reads our petitions according to the outward utterance, but according to the inward groaning. He notices the longing, the desiring, the sighing, the crying.

Remember that the outward of prayer is but the shell, the inward of prayer is its true kernel and essence. If prayer is wafted to heaven in the song of the multitude, with the swell of glorious music, it is not one whit more acceptable to God than when it is wailed forth in the bitter cry of anguish from a desolate spirit. That cry so discordant to human ears is music to the ears of God.

"To Him there's music in a sigh,

And beauty in a tear."

Notice this, then, and be comforted.

III. The text may further serve as A CHART to direct us in the way of prayer.

Here I shall need to speak at greater length. Praying how? By the book? Without a book? In public? In private? By the way? In the house? On your knees? Standing? Sitting? Kneeling? Nothing is said about these. Posture, place, and time are all left open. There is no rule except one, "in the Holy Ghost." That is indispensable. That granted, nothing else signifies one whit. If it is praying in the Holy Ghost, all else may be as you will.

What does praying in the Holy Ghost mean? The word may be translated, "by the Holy Ghost," or "through the Holy Ghost," as well as, "in the Holy Ghost," and the phrase means, first, praying in the Holy Ghost's power. The carnal mind knows nothing about this. I might as well express myself in high Dutch as in English upon this point to an unregenerate man, but regenerate men who are born of the Spirit, and live in the Spirit world are cognizant of communications between their spirits and the Holy Spirit, who is now resident in the midst of the church of God.

We know that the divine Spirit, without the use of sounds, speaks in our hearts, that without an utterance which the ear can hear, He can make our soul know His presence and understand His meaning. He casts the spiritual shadow of His influence over us, coloring our thoughts and feelings according to His own design and will. It is a great spiritual fact which the Christian knows for certain that the Holy Ghost, the divine Spirit, has frequent dealings with spiritual minds, and imparts to them His power. Our new-born spirit has a certain degree of power in it, but the power is never fully manifested or drawn out except when the Spirit of God quickens our spirit and excites it to activity.

Our spirit prays, but it is because it is overshadowed and filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. I cannot just now explain myself, but I mean this, that if I, as a man, could go to the throne of grace and only pray as my fleshy nature would pray, that prayer would be unacceptable. But when I go to the mercy seat and my new nature prays as the Holy Ghost enables me to pray, then my prayer will succeed with God. If I do before God at the throne what flesh and blood can do and no more, I have done nothing, for that which is of the flesh still mounts no higher than flesh.

But if, in coming before the throne of the heavenly grace, God's eternal Spirit speaks to my soul and lifts it out of the dead level of fallen humanity, and brings it up to be filled with divine force, if that Spirit is in me a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, if I receive that divine light and power of the Holy Ghost, and if in His power I fervently draw near to God, my prayer must be prevalent with God. This power may be possessed by every Christian. May God grant it to all of His people now, that they may all pray in the Spirit! That, I think, is one meaning of the text—praying in the power of the Spirit.

No doubt the principal sense of the text is praying in the Spirit as to matter. We do not always know what to pray for, and brethren, if we were to refrain from prayer for a few minutes till we did know, it would be a good and wise rule. The habit into which we have fallen in extemporaneous praying of always praying directly when we are asking, without an instant's pause in which to think of what we are going to ask, is very prejudicial to the spirit of prayer. I would like, when I am alone, to take a few minutes to consider what I am going to ask of God, for otherwise it seems to me to be like seeking an interview with one of the officers of state, to ask for something which might occur to us at the moment.

How would you like to have an audience with Lord Derby, and then consider all of a sudden what it was you had come for? Surely common sense would say, Tarry awhile till you have your case mapped out in your own mind, and then when you clearly know yourself what it is you want, you will be able to ask for what you need. Should we not wait upon God in prayer, asking Him to reveal to us what those matters are concerning which we should plead with Him? Beware of hit-or-miss prayers. Never make haphazard work of supplication. Come to the throne of grace intelligently understanding what it is that you require.

It is well with us in prayer when the Holy Ghost guides the mind. Are not all spiritual men conscious of this, that they feel themselves shut up as to certain matters, and only free in another direction. Then let them obey the Holy Spirit and pray as He directs, for He knows what should be our petition. Well, then what? My dear brother, pray for that which God the Spirit moves you to pray for, and be very sensitive of the Holy Spirit's influence.

I like a metaphor used by Thomas Shillitoe in his *Life*, when he says he wished his own mind to be like a cork upon the water, conscious of every motion of the Spirit of God. It were well to be so sensitive of the Spirit of God, that His faintest breath would cause a ripple upon the sea of our soul, and make it move as the Spirit would have it. We have reached a high state of sanctification when God the Spirit and our own inward spirit are perfectly in accord. May we be led into that unspeakably blessed state!

We do not pray aright if we think what it is we want and we wish for, and then ask for it in selfish willfulness, but we pray aright when we consent to that which is the mind of the Spirit, and speak as He moves us to speak. We shall be surely enriched with good things when we wait for the very matter of our supplications to have it all from Him.

Lord, teach us to pray. Put the thoughts into our minds, the desires into our hearts, and the very words into our lips, if it is Your will, that so all through it may be praying in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

The main part of praying in the Spirit must lie not merely in the Spirit's power, or in the Spirit's teaching us the matter, but in the Spirit's *assisting us in the manner*. Observe, brethren, the many ways there are of praying which are obnoxious to God. Observe them and avoid them. There is but one manner of praying which the Lord accepts. You know what it is. I will briefly describe its attributes. He that comes to God must remember that He is "a Spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him."

The very first essential of prayer is to pray in *truth*, and we do not pray in truth unless the Spirit of God leads our vain minds into the sincerity and reality of devotion. To pray in truth, is this—it is not to use the empty expression of prayer, but to mean what we say. It is for the heart to agonize with God and heave with strong desires, and where will you obtain such a manner of prayer except in the spiritual man, when moved by the Holy Ghost? The carnal man, if he is foolish enough, can intone a prayer. The carnal man can "read the office," and "do duty" as well as anybody else who can read a book, but he is not praying. No prayer can come from him. Only the spiritual man can sigh and long, and cry in his inmost heart, and in the chamber of his soul before God, but he will not do it except as the Spirit of truth leads him in sincerity into the secret of heart-prayer.

Praying in the Holy Ghost is praying in *fervency*. Cold prayers, my brethren, ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire as of lukewarm prayer. It is essential that it be red hot. Real prayer is burnt as with hot iron into a man's soul, and then comes forth from the man's soul like coals of juniper which have a most vehement heat. Such prayers none but the Holy Ghost can give.

I have heard from this spot prayers which I never can forget, nor will you ever forget them either. Last January and February there were times when certain of our brethren were helped to pray with such power that we were bowed down in humiliation, and afterwards borne up as on the wings of eagles in the power of supplication. There is a way of praying with power in which a man seems to get hold of the posts of heaven's gate, as Samson grasped the pillars of the temple, and appears as though he would pull all down upon himself sooner than miss the blessing. It is a brave thing for the heart to vow, "I will not let you go except you bless me." That is praying in the Holy Ghost. May we be tutored in the art of offering effectual fervent prayer!

Next to that, it is essential in prayer that we should pray *perseveringly*. Any man can run fast at a spurt, but to keep it up mile after mile, there is the battle. And so, certain hot spirits can pray very fervently once now and then, but to continue in prayer—who shall do this except the Spirit of God sustains him? Mortal spirits flag and tire. The course of mere fleshly devotion is as the course of a snail

which melts as it crawls. Carnal minds go onward and their devotion grows small by degrees and miserably less, as they cry out, "What a weariness it is!"

But when the Holy Ghost fills a man and leads him into prayer, he gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent even when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed the more vehemently does he use the knocker, till he thunders in his prayer, and the longer the Angel lingers, the more resolved is he that if he grasps Him with a death grip he will never let Him go without the blessing. Beautiful in God's sight is tearful and yet unconquerable persistence. Jesus delights to be laid hold of by one who says, "I cannot take No for an answer, this blessing I must have, for You have promised it and You have taught me to ask for it, and I will not believe that You can belie yourself." Surely we must have the Holy Spirit to help us thus to pray.

Praying in the Spirit we shall be sure to pray in a *holy* frame of mind. Brethren and sisters, do you ever get distracted in your minds? "Ah," you say, "I wonder when I am not." I will venture to say that you have come into this house burdened, and yet on the road you were saying, "This is a blessed Sabbath day, I feel I have God's presence." Some silly gossip met you on the steps, and told you an idle tale which distracted you. You may even get quietly seated here, and then the recollection of a child at home, or the remembrance of what somebody said about six weeks ago will perplex your mind, so that you cannot pray.

But when the Holy Spirit comes, He takes a scourge of small cords and drives these buyers and sellers out of the temple and leaves it clear for God, and then you can come with a holy, devout frame of mind, fixed and settled in your great object of approach to God. This is to approach Him in the Spirit. Oh for more of this blessed, undisturbed devotion!

I could not, however, finish the description of praying in the Spirit if I did not say that it means praying *humbly*, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. He is the Spirit that convicts of sin, and so bows us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We must pray before God like the humble publican, or we shall never go forth justified as he was. We shall never sing *Gloria in Excelsis* except we pray to God *De Profundis*. Out of the depths must we cry or we shall never see the glory in the highest.

True prayer must be *loving* prayer, if it is praying in the Holy Ghost. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love, love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of *faith*. The effectual fervent prayer of a man prevails only as he believes in God, and the Holy Spirit is the author of faith in us, and nurtures and strengthens it so that we pray believing God's promises. Oh that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Ghost's power is shed abroad in our hearts! Time fails me, therefore I must dispense with a full description of what praying in the Holy Ghost is, but I hope you will possess it and so understand it.

IV. Fourthly, I shall use the text as A CHERUB to proclaim our success in prayer.

Praying in the Spirit—blessed word! Then with such prayer it is an absolute certainty that I must succeed with God in prayer. If my prayer were my own prayer, I might not be so sure of it, but if the prayer which I utter is God's own prayer written on my soul, God is always one with Himself, and what He writes on the heart is only written there because it is written in His purposes. It is said by an old divine that prayer is the shadow of Omnipotence. Our will, when God the Holy Spirit influences it, is the indicator of God's will. When God's people pray, it is because the blessing is coming, and their prayers are the shadow of the coming blessing.

Rest assured of this, brethren, God never did belie Himself, He never contradicted in one place what He said in another. You and I may contradict ourselves, not only through untruthfulness, but even through infirmity. We may not be able to stand up to our word, and we may forget what we say, and so in another place may say something that contradicts it, but God is neither infirm as to memory, nor yet changeable as to will. What He promised yesterday He fulfills today, and what He said in one place, He declares in another. Then if God said in my heart, "Pray for So-and-So," it is because He has said it in

the book of His decrees. The Spirit of God's writing in the heart always tallies with the writing of destiny in the book of God's eternal purpose. Rest assured that you cannot but succeed when you have laid your soul like a sheet of paper before the Lord, and asked Him to write upon it. Then it is no more your own prayer merely, but the Spirit making intercession in you according to the will of God.

At such time you need not say, "I hope God will answer the prayer." He will do it—He is pledged to do it. It is a kind of infidelity to say, "I do not know whether the Lord is true to His promise or not, but I hope He is." He is true. Let God be true and every man a liar. Oh, if more of you tried Him as some of us have been compelled to do, you would have to hold up your hands in astonishment, and say, "Verily, whatever else is not a fact, it is a fact that God, who sits in the highest heavens, listens to the cries of His people, and gives them according to the desire of their hearts." If the Spirit teaches you to pray, it is as certain as two times two make four, that God will give you what you are seeking for.

V. Then I will use the text in conclusion as A CHARIOT in which to convey our own souls onward in the delightful exercise of prayer.

The exercise allotted to us today and tomorrow is that of praying in the Spirit. Brethren and sisters, it is delightful to some of us to believe that the Spirit of God is the author of the great wave of prayer now breaking over the churches to which we belong. It was not of our devising or planning, but it was the motion of God's Holy Spirit upon a few brethren who desired to spend a day in solemn prayer, and found such blessing in it that they could not but tell others of it, that then others spontaneously moved, and without a word of opposition or difference of opinion all said, "Amen. Let us meet together for prayer also."

The spirit of brotherly kindness, unanimity, and love was given to our denomination, and then a spirit of earnest desire to bring down a blessing from God. We have known the time when it was not so. We have known the time when a day of fasting and prayer, if not despised, at any rate would not have been appreciated as it will be now. We are of one heart in this matter, and I know from communications with many Christian men, that many of God's people already feel as if they were peculiarly in prayer, as if it were no effort now to pray, but as if it were their very breath now to breathe out longing desires for the revival of saints and the ingathering of sinners.

Brethren of this church, you have had God's presence for many years, you have been favored with much of "Praying in the Holy Ghost," and seen with your own eyes the great things God has done in answer to supplication. Will one of you draw back now? Will there be one man today or tomorrow who will not be earnest in prayer? Will one man, or even one child in union with this church, be lukewarm in prayer? I would say, Sin not against the Lord by abstaining from going up to the mercy seat with your brethren. Offend not the Lord so that He deprive you of the blessing because you deprive yourself of joining in the exercise.

My dear friends, it was when they were all met together with one accord in one place, that suddenly they heard the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind. We cannot be all in one place, but at any rate, let us be all with one accord. What, do you say you have nothing to pray for? What! No children unconverted, no friends unsaved, no neighbors who are still in darkness? What! live in London and not pray for sinners! Where do you live! Is it in some vast wilderness, amidst "some continuous mass of shade," where rumor of sin and of ignorance has never reached your ear? No, you are living in the midst of millions, of ungodly millions, of millions who despise the God who made them, that despise the Gospel of Christ—of millions, not thousands—hear that word and see if you can tell its meaning. Millions who are living without God and without hope, and are going down to hell.

We have, throughout the realm, too, dangerous mischiefs spreading. Need I continually remind you of them—infidelity wearing the miter, and Popery usurping the place of Protestantism. You are assailed by the wolf and the lion, the serpent and the bear, all forms of mischief are coming forth to attack the church. Not pray! If you pray not, shall I say, May you smart for your negligence? Nay, I dare not in the slightest shade speak as though I invoked a woe upon you, but the woe will come upon you, depend

upon it. If I say it not, yet will God say it at this present hour, “Curse you Meroz, said the LORD, because they came not up to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.”

We are not asking you to contribute of your wealth in this case. If we did, the Lord Jesus has a right to it, and you should freely give it. Neither are we asking you all this day to preach, if we did, some of you might be excused for lack of ability. But we claim your prayers, and must not be denied. Not able to pray! Then are you graceless, Christless, hopeless, lost, and I will not ask you to join with us, but ask you first to go to God for yourselves. But if you are a Christian you can pray. Poverty does not make you poor in prayer, lack of education need not hinder you upon your knees, lack of position and rank in society will be no encumbrance to you when you deal with God, who hears the poor man when he cries and answers him with an abundance of grace.

Brethren and sisters, if you love Christ, if you ever felt His love shed abroad in your heart, if you have been washed in His blood, if you have been saved from the wrath of God through Him, if you are new creatures in Him, if you hope to see His face with acceptance at the last, I might put it to you as a demand, but I press it upon you as a brotherly entreaty, join with us in praying in the Holy Ghost. Shall one start back? Take heed then, if you refuse to unite with your brethren in prayer, lest when you choose to cry you should find yourself straitened and shut up in prison. Beware, lest by refusing to pray now that the Spirit of God has come, you afterwards feel yourself deprived of the comfortable presence of the Holy Ghost, and find the sweetness of devotion to have departed from you.

The Lord send a blessing. He must send it, our hearts will break if He does not. We feel that it is coming. We have grasped the promise, we have pleaded with JEHOVAH. We have pleaded the blood of Jesus. We are pleading it now. We mean to continue in such pleading till the blessing comes, and we may rely upon it that the heavenly shower will soon descend. He has not said to the seed of Jacob, “Seek you my face in vain.” Brethren, be hopeful, and let us unanimously join in praying in the Holy Ghost.

May the Lord bless you, dear friends, in this respect for Jesu’s sake.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.